

Help With Having Little Interest or Feeling Depressed

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/depression>

Feeling Down?

Sadness is common after a cancer diagnosis. People with cancer, as well as their friends and family, can feel depressed at any time after a cancer diagnosis. Many things can cause these feelings. Changes in body image can affect self-esteem and confidence. Family and work roles may be altered. People might feel grief at these losses and changes. Physical symptoms such as pain, nausea, or extreme tiredness (fatigue) also seem more likely to cause emotional distress. People might also fear unknown things that lie ahead.

Your health care team is there to treat the whole person, including your mental health concerns. Discussing these feelings with your health care team when they arise can strengthen your emotional well-being and provide an enormous sense of relief.

Content adapted from websites below.

There are resources available to cancer patients to talk about their feelings. Social workers, counselors, support groups and psychologists who specialize in supporting cancer patients are available at many cancer centers and in the community.

Depression may make it harder to cope with cancer treatment. It may also reduce your ability to make choices about your care. As a result, identifying and treating depression are important aspects of cancer treatment. Try to talk openly with your health care team about depression. This will help them address your concerns and create a treatment plan.

Treatment of depression

There are many effective treatments for depression. For people with moderate or severe depression, a mix of psychological treatment (or counseling) and medication is often the most effective approach. For some people with depression, talking with a mental health professional may be enough to relieve symptoms. For others, medication alone may work.

Psychological treatment

Mental health professionals include licensed counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists. They provide tools to improve coping skills, develop a support system, and reframe distorted thoughts.

Medications

Different types of antidepressant medications are available. If medication is recommended, the most appropriate antidepressant suggested will be based on the severity of the depression symptoms, potential side effects, other medications taken and medical history.

Medication is particularly effective for improving mood and the physical symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty sleeping or changes in eating habits. Oncologists can prescribe antidepressant medication, but a referral to a psychiatrist may also be made if further medication management is needed. Adding psychological treatment to medication may be helpful for managing distressing thoughts & practicing better coping strategies.

Local Organizations providing support for anyone impacted by cancer:

Cancer Wellness Center	Northern Suburbs	Cancerwellness.org	847-509-9595	Programas en Español
Gilda's Club Chicago	Chicago	Gildasclubchicago.org	312-464-9900	Programas en Español
Living Well Cancer Resource Center	Far West Suburbs	Livingwellcrc.org	630-262-1111	
The Cancer Support Center	South Suburbs	CancerSupportCenter.org	708-798-9171	
Wellness House in Chicago	Northwest & West Suburbs	Wellnesshouse.org	630-323-5150	

Access an interactive map of these local resources at: <http://cancer-help.me/communitycancerresourcecenters>

Resources for Additional Information:

- [American Cancer Society, Depression](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Anxiety, Fear, and Depression](#)
- [NCCN, Patient and Caregiver Resources, Advocacy and Support Groups](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Depression](#)
- [NIH, Depression \(PDQ®\)](#)
- [NIH, Learning to Relax](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Coping With Sadness Throughout and After Treatment](#)
- [CancerCare.org, How to Recognize and Change Negative Thought](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Cómo hacer frente al cáncer](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Depresión \(PDQ®\)–Versión para pacientes](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Consejería para lidiar mejor con un diagnóstico de cáncer](#)